



Cygnets 3: Indigenous Cultural Competency

Response to Reviewers' Comments

Name of institution	University of Newcastle
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Award Level	Cygnets
Date joined Athena SWAN	Cohort One – January 2016
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UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE: SAGE CYGNET 3		
BARRIER TYPE	CURRENT CYGNET	BARRIER
Mandatory Sub-group barrier		STEM Pipeline: Difficulty attracting and recruiting female students and academic staff into the College of Engineering, Science and Environment
Mandatory Institution-wide barrier		Career Development Support
Institution- wide barrier		Indigenous Cultural Competency
Institution- wide/Sub-group barrier		
Institution- wide/Sub-group barrier		

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

ASWP	Athena Swan Working Party
ICIP	Indigenous Procurement and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural and Intellectual Property Protocol
ISN	Indigenous Staff Network
OISL	Office of Indigenous Strategy and Leadership
RAP	Reconciliation Action Plan
RA	Reconciliation Australia
SAGE	Science Australia Gender Equity
WBR	Reconciliation Australia's Workplace RAP Barometer
Wollotuka	The Wollotuka Institute

Review Group's Request for Additional Information Regarding Impact

The University of Newcastle welcomes the Review Group's request for Additional Information regarding Impact. It has allowed the University to return to the evidence collected from engagement with the intended beneficiaries of the action in the form of a **change to the self-reported lived experience of staff** as a result of **reducing the Indigenous Cultural Competency Barrier**.

The Review Group noted that impact has been captured across many dimensions important for cultural competency, including perspectives from participation in actions from Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff, and requested additional detail around both the methodology and analysis of the captured data.

The Review Group requested the following *Additional Information*:

1. A couple of sentences providing commentary on improving Indigenous Cultural Competency through an intersectional gender lens;
2. Detail of the methodology for impact, including collection methods, the scope and response rate;
3. Evidence of actual cultural change as a result of the actions undertaken or further reflection on this;
4. Whether any negative responses were received and if so, how these will be addressed in future actions;
5. What is the plan going forward for more comprehensive evaluation of impact, including reflection on challenges; and
6. Any data on the 30% of staff who did not complete cultural competency training.

In preparing this *Additional Information*, the University of Newcastle has focused on providing evidence of impact from our actions; and/or a rationale for any gaps between desired and actual impact.

1. Commentary on Improving Indigenous Cultural Competency through an intersectional gender lens

The University of Newcastle recognises that while all staff and students share in the impact of improved Indigenous Cultural Competency, there may be different barriers for Indigenous men vs. women and non-binary cohorts. For this reason, when the team from the Office of Indigenous Strategy and Leadership (OISL) deliver the face-to-face components of the Cultural Competency training, it is delivered with two presenters – one male and one female. This is done both **to ensure the cultural safety of the presenters and to provide an intersectional gender lens within the training.**

In the evaluation of the Cultural Competency training, qualitative and quantitative evidence was collected with demographic data related to gender. In the analysis of the data collected for this Cygnet, there was **no intersectional variation detected in relation to Cultural Competency.**

The University of Newcastle also takes this opportunity to respond to the additional *Developmental Feedback* of the Review Group, where an Intersectional Approach was also encouraged:

As noted in the progress section, to strengthen their approach going forward Newcastle should consider intersections in an Aboriginal cultural context. For example, different barriers for Aboriginal men and Aboriginal women, urban living vs. regional/remote, any geographical, mob or clan related influences, the influence of Aboriginal eldership, the challenges of caring (particularly with an Aboriginal cultural lens placed on 'caring' given the differences to the role of carers of other cultural backgrounds, for example), community living with disability, gender diversity, etc. (Cygnet 3 Review Group)

The University of Newcastle is attuned to barriers as they impact on Indigenous staff and students who come from diverse backgrounds (such as urban vs. regional and/or remote environments), those who have additional challenges related to caring responsibilities, and/or disabilities. Demographic information beyond gender is supplied on a voluntary basis. Thus, the University has limited data from a small cohort of Indigenous staff. While some demographic data is collected from students upon enrolment, disclosure for many relevant data points remains voluntary. An Indigenous student member of the University's Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) Committee has relayed the hesitations in disclosing disability, which further explains limitations around data availability. Having that lived experience on the DIAP committee, however, will assist in addressing those intersectional challenges and creating confidence around disclosure. Similarly, the OISL and the Indigenous Staff Network (ISN) will assist in the future by creating confidence in the appropriate collection and use of more comprehensive demographic datasets. Going forward, the University is committed to exploring expanded datasets for intersectional insights.

2. Detail of the methodology for impact, including collection methods, the scope, the response rate

2.1 Evaluating impact as collected through the Cultural Capability Feedback Survey:

As of March 2023, 649 staff (26% of training participants) had responded to the ongoing Cultural Capability feedback survey. Of these surveys, 470/649 (72%) included a response to the free-text question seeking overall feedback/comments. This question was included at the end of the confidential, voluntary survey and phrased as follows: *“If you have any additional feedback on any aspect of the training (ie modules / workshop), please enter below”*. The qualitative insight from these training participants formed the raw data that was used for analysis.

This data was reviewed by a qualitative researcher and analyst in the Athena Swan Working Party (ASWP), who confirmed the response rate to be statistically reliable. The data was analysed using a step-wise process of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022; 2023). First, the analyst read through all responses and prepared word documents of the data sets which were then uploaded and coded in QSR NVivo (2020) – a software tool that supports qualitative analysis. Final themes were proposed and discussed with the evaluation team, who then contributed by assigning names to themes and choosing applicable/supportive quotes for each. The analyst used a purely inductive approach, without any pre-conceived ideas or categories. The analyst searched for deviant cases in the data to ensure incorporation and reporting of any discrepant findings. The methods of analysis were supported by Indigenous team members and the findings were shared with the OISL.

2.2 Evaluating impact through direct testimonials and feedback of University staff and students:

In consultation with the OISL, the ASWP determined that the most ethical (culturally appropriate) and efficient method to report impact from the perspective of Indigenous Staff and Students was through direct testimonials and feedback. These data sets were ascertained through conversational discourse which is better aligned with Indigenous ways of knowing in the University context.

The ASWP acquired this data by contacting key informants. Specifically, we emailed Indigenous representatives from the Wollotuka Institute, OISL and ISN, and asked them to respond to the following questions:

1. *What are your thoughts on the below initiatives, and whether you feel they have impacted on Indigenous representation of Staff and/or Students.*
2. *Do you have any other comments in general about the support the University provides Indigenous Staff and/or Students.*

The ASWP also used snowball sampling methods - asking these key informants to forward this email to any other potential key informants who may be interested in participating i.e., they acted as a gatekeeper for other participants. We directly extracted quotes from responses that best displayed impact for each respective program/initiative of interest.

The University’s aim in this Cygnet report is to evaluate impact for reporting to SAGE; however, we are committed to doing so via culturally safe approaches, which includes decolonizing methodologies in our evaluation (Smith, 2021). We have planned for further evaluation using more rigorous research

methods using an Indigenous-led study discussed further in the section below addressing the Review Group’s point: *What is the plan going forward for more comprehensive evaluation of impact, including reflection on challenges?* (see below, section 5)

3. Evidence of actual cultural change as a result of actions undertaken or further reflection on this

Further reflection on actual cultural change as a result of actions was undertaken in relation to the University of Newcastle’s Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2022-2025, with additional evidence found by utilizing Reconciliation Australia’s Workplace RAP Barometer (WBR).

The University’s RAP provides a whole-of-institution, integrated and collaborative approach for advancing *Respect, Relationships, and Opportunities* to create equity in education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and to embed culturally appropriate knowledge and understandings across the University. The RAP also integrates actions and targets aligned to the Cultural Capability Framework and ‘Maligagu’ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy and Action Plan and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Research Framework (both of which were reported on in the original Cygnet 3 application).

Reconciliation Australia (RA) has monitored reconciliation initiatives at the workplace level since 2012, through regular online surveys of participating employees. The Workplace RAP Barometer (WRB) enables both RA and the participating organisations to measure the impact of RAP initiatives including evaluation of key initiatives, such as an organisation’s cultural capability, with a view to improving the performance of workplace RAPs that empower employment and social outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as working towards a greater shared understanding for all Australians.

To determine a baseline for its Stretch RAP, the University of Newcastle participated in the WRB in 2020 and then again in 2022 to **measure progress**. This 2-part evaluation of impact involved: (Part 1) comparing the University’s 2022 RAP results with the aggregated total results from all participating organisations at the Stretch RAP level (Figs. 1 and 2); and (Part 2) tracking the University’s results since the previous WRB in 2022.



Fig. 1 University of Newcastle Results

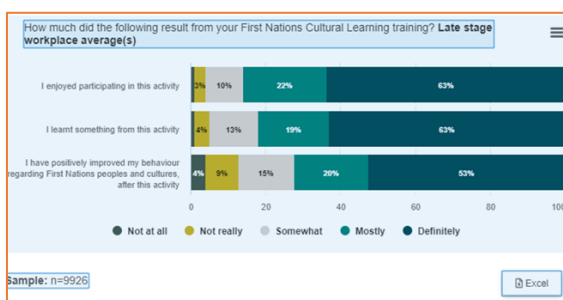


Fig. 2 Aggregated National Results

Part 1: Tracing the University’s 2022 RAP results in comparison with aggregated totals:

- 99% of University staff surveyed said that the relationship between First Nations people and other Australians was important for Australia as a nation as compared to 97% of the workplace average.

- **91%** of University staff surveyed said they were interested to get involved in activities that support reconciliation/cultural understanding as compared to **78%** of the workplace average.
- **86%** of University staff surveyed said they knew who the traditional Custodians of the lands where they work are, as compared to **66%** of the workplace average.
- **98%** of University staff surveyed said they enjoyed participating in Cultural Learning Training compared to **85%** of the workplace average. (Figs 1 and 2)
- **85%** of University staff surveyed said they definitely learnt something from this activity compared to **63%** of the workplace average.
- **81%** of University staff surveyed said they have positively improved their behaviour regarding First Nations peoples and cultures after this activity compared to **73%** of the workplace average.
- **90%** of University staff surveyed said that they thought the organisation would benefit from having First Nations executives or managers compared to **73%** of the workplace average.

Part 2: Tracking the university’s results since previous Barometer in 2020

- In 2023 **90%** of University staff surveyed said they had received First Nations Cultural training compared to **60%** in 2020.
- In 2023 **59%** of staff University staff surveyed said they had attended an event to celebrate National Reconciliation Week compared to **39%** in 2020.
- **65%** of University staff surveyed said they had personally delivered an Acknowledgment of Country compared to **32%** in 2020.
- In 2023 **70%** of staff surveyed said they had engaged with people from a local First Nations community compared to **49%** in 2020.
- In 2023 **85%** of University staff surveyed said they were aware of the Universities Reconciliation Action Plan compared to **39%** in 2020.

In addition to the RAP Barometer results above, impact was also seen via the University’s Your Voice staff engagement survey comparison results (Fig. 3). Increases from the same questions asked in 2021 and 2023 highlighted a 6% increase in positive responses (*strongly agree/agree*) to question 81 (*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures are valued in the workplace*) and a 17% increase in responses to question 82 (*I have opportunities to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures*) with an overall rating of 90% for each, the highest for any of the questions in the Your Voice survey.

Indigenous Histories and Cultures	81	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures are valued in the workplace	5%	90%	+6%
	82	I have opportunities to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures	4%	90%	+17%

Fig. 3 The University 2023 Your Voice Results related to Indigenous Histories and Cultures

4. Whether any negative responses were received, and if so, how these will be addressed in their future actions

The ASWP **did not receive any negative feedback in the testimonials/data** from the Indigenous Staff and Students that responded to emails and/or provided testimonials. The qualitative researcher and analyst adopted an inductive analytic approach which included searching for deviant cases/discrepancies across the data set. Therefore, any negative responses would have been highlighted/distinctly noted and taken into consideration during analysis. It is possible that our sample is not representative of participants with negative responses (i.e., they did not complete a survey and/or the qualitative question). However, the representation in the sample adding qualitative feedback was high (>70%), and the positive responses are corroborated by the quantitative findings showing high ratings (workshop delivery and content=average 4.9/5; knowledge acquisition=99% agreed/strongly agreed; and recommendation for others=98% agreed/strongly agreed). Finally, issues of positive response bias are mitigated by the voluntary and confidential nature of the survey which was made clear to participants from the onset.

A **small number of negative responses and/or adverse reactions (n5 and <3%)** were received in the total feedback responses **collected via survey as part of the Cultural Capability training**. An additional 12 responses were recommendations for improvement related solely to the structure/logistics of the full-day workshop (nothing relating to the content or delivery). For example, several participants recommended to extend the training across a full day and to provide a lunch for attendees. This feedback was presented to the OISL for consideration but was unrelated to the impact for participants (e.g., even where recommendations were provided, participants still reported a positive impact).

The remaining **five comments** focused on the following themes:

- the workshop shouldn't be mandatory;
- offence taken to reference to an anti-colonial comment;
- the training wasn't a platform to have political discussions and opinions about The Voice Referendum; and
- a trigger response to the 'What Does Home Mean to You' activity (x2 comments).

The OISL review all feedback comments and take appropriate action as required.

In addition to the Cultural Competency Survey feedback, the Workplace RAP Barometer results showed that racism and prejudice is still being experienced by staff within the University. 8% of staff surveyed said they had personally experienced or witnessed incidence of prejudice/racism towards First Nations stakeholders in the past 12 months within the organisation with another 26% saying they have heard or suspect prejudice or racism but have not witnessed it personally. **OISL reported on these statistics to Executive Committee in April 2023 and proposed that a specific module on racism and its effects be included in the Cultural Capability training modules.** This is currently in development.

One of the key goals for the Stretch RAP is to embed reconciliation principles and activities across the entire University to become 'business as usual' with all staff (both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous) taking responsibility within their roles to drive reconciliation outcomes. Despite this 14% of staff surveyed said that they believed First Nations employees were primarily responsible for advancing reconciliation outcomes. **Future key messaging will reinforce the principles that reconciliation is 'everyone's business'.**

5. What is the plan going forward for more comprehensive evaluation of impact, including reflection on challenges?

The University of Newcastle is currently **developing a protocol for a more comprehensive evaluation of impact** – a Follow Up Impact Evaluation – including reflection on challenges. This protocol is being drafted in consultation with our Indigenous team members and with guidance from (i) the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Quality Appraisal Tool (Harfield et al, 2018) and (ii) the research checklist provided in the University of Newcastle protocol for Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP). In this evaluation, we will draw on the insight of Aboriginal and Torres-Strait Islander Staff and Students. The voices of participants will be prioritised, and they will be attributed for their ICIP and involvement. The research is focused on building the strengths and resources of the University's Indigenous community, and it will provide an opportunity to strengthen the collaborative partnerships between the ASWP, OISL, Wollotuka, and the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion unit at the University.

At this time, any study/evaluation would be inappropriate and unethical if not Indigenous-led (Denzin, 2008); therefore we are seeking to recruit an Indigenous representative of the University (staff or student) into the ASWP to lead the evaluation. Once we have secured this position, we will be able to support progressing the evaluation via methods decisions.

It is essential that research involving Indigenous populations use an Indigenous-specific methodological approach – what is acceptable for research is determined and defined from within the community. Research “must be localized, grounded in the specific meanings, traditions, customs, and community relations that operate in each indigenous setting” (Denzin, 2008). Therefore, the data collection and analytic processes will be determined by the Indigenous lead and Indigenous members of the research team. One possible approach of data collection may be via Yarning which is a cultural communication approach that has been used by Indigenous scholars at the University of Newcastle given that it is a respectful, reciprocal and responsible research practice (Kennedy et al., 2022).

In this **Follow Up Impact Evaluation**, Indigenous Staff and Students will have the opportunity to provide further insight/perspectives on the impact of Indigenous programs at the University, and progress in addressing representation; as well as to provide recommendations for the University to address barriers of Indigenous representation. Data will be explored to assess (i) any positive impacts, (ii) any challenges in addressing representation (including barriers and facilitators to overcoming challenges), and (iii) areas for improvement.

To prepare for this Follow Up Impact Evaluation, OISL have worked with Professor TL Hill, a visiting scholar from the Fox School of Business and Management at Temple University, to develop a method to measure the impact that the Cultural Capability training has had on participants more broadly than the initial survey. It draws from the six key standards of the Leadership Framework in the Cultural Capability Wheel (Fig. 4) and is informed by the Domain Indicators and Standards (Fig. 5) in the Cultural Capability Framework. This broader evaluation is **scheduled to commence in 2024**.

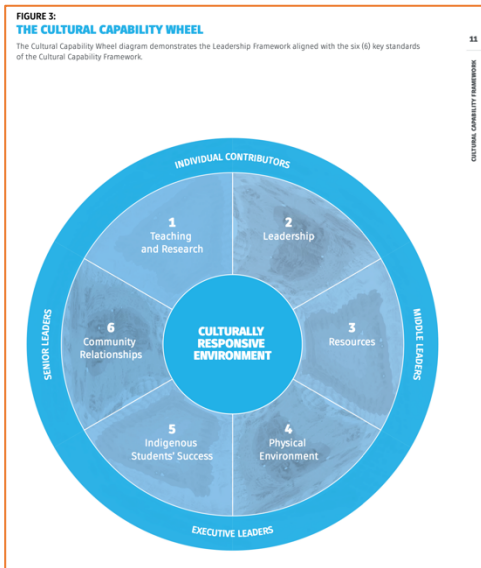


Fig. 4 Key standards of Cultural Capability

DOMAIN INDICATORS AND STANDARDS
The expected outcomes of each of the domains and the six (6) standards of activity are as follows:

DOMAIN	STANDARD
 KNOWING: To Know Knowledge and understanding of cultural practices, protocols, values, perspectives, issues, dynamics.	1. Teaching and Research: All graduates of the University of Newcastle are culturally capable and can undertake the best standards of ethical research.
 DOING: To Do Actions, behaviour, communication, ways of working in a respectful way in accordance with protocols.	2. Leadership: Leaders who develop and sustain individual and institutional wide focus on improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff and communities. 3. Resources: Allocation of resources to optimise the education and employment outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff.
 BELONGING: To Belong Creating reciprocal obligations and creating nurturing, respectful relationships.	4. Physical environment: Campus environments are culturally welcoming and inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. 5. Indigenous students' success: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieve parity across all academic disciplines.
 BEING: To Be Comfortable in one's ability. Empathetic and non-judgemental to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and demonstrates authentic respect for culture.	6. Community Relationships: The University of Newcastle operates in partnership with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and disseminates culturally capable practices into the wider community.

Fig. 5 Expected outcomes of the Standards of Activity

The Follow Up Impact Evaluation survey will be sent to participants via email after completing the training and asks staff to reflect on the effectiveness of the Cultural Capability Training (See Fig. 6 for the draft email content). It includes four questions (Table 1):

1	In what month/year did you complete 'phase 2' of the Cultural Capability Training, the in-person workshop?
2	What is the most memorable thing that you learned from Cultural Capability Training?
3	Please describe one way, if any, that the Cultural Capability Training has influenced your professional life?
4	Please describe one way, if any, that the Cultural Capability Training has influenced your personal life?

Table 1: Follow Up Impact Evaluation Survey Questions

Thank you for engaging in the Cultural Capability Training. Now that some time has passed since you have participated in the training, we would like you to reflect on how this training has impacted you. Could you please take 10 minutes to respond to the following 4 questions. Your answers will help us assess the effectiveness of the Cultural Capability Training. As a reminder, please see the 6 standards of the Cultural Capability Framework.

Fig. 6 Draft Email Content for Follow Up Impact Evaluation Survey

Qualitative responses will be coded by staff members in OISL against the Cultural Capability Framework to determine where staff are on the continuum (Fig. 7).

1	2	3	4	5
CONTINUUM				
	CULTURAL AWARENESS (Emerging)	CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING (Developing)	CULTURAL SAFETY (Capable)	CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS (Proficient)
	2.1.1 Leaders are aware of the importance of developing a vision that is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aspirations.	2.1.2 Leaders align the vision with the needs and expectations of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Leaders and staff understand the commitment to all students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.	2.1.3 Leaders work with students, staff and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members on the development of a vision. Leaders and staff demonstrate a commitment to high expectations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.	2.1.4 Leaders, in collaboration with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, have developed a strong, sustainable education partnership that reflects the expectations and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Leaders and staff demonstrate a commitment to high expectations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in a culture of continuous improvement.

Fig. 7 Coding for Follow Up Impact Evaluation

OISL staff will be guided in this coding through a 3-step process (Table 2):

Step 1	Read story (related to Q3) and gauge which standard it aligns closest to
Step 2	Find which part of the continuum is the best fit for the story
Step 3	Place the story on the continuum based of perceived power of impact (1-5)

Table 2: Steps in the Coding Process of the Follow Up Impact Evaluation

6. Is there any data on the 30% of staff who didn't complete cultural competency training? These voices are seemingly missing from the impact data as this was collected on completion of training.

The 30% statistic referenced by the Review Group includes new staff who have joined the institution in 2023 (approximately 500 or 15% of the workforce) and have not yet had the opportunity to complete the 3-stage training program. Introduced in 2021, it takes time for all staff to complete all components of the comprehensive Cultural Competency Training Program, which includes: three online modules, a 3-hour face-to-face workshop, and a ½ or full day On-Country experience (Fig. 8). On any one day, across the entire institution, staff are on many different types of leave (i.e.: parental leave, sick leave, Special Study Leave, Long Service Leave, and annual leave) which prevent participations in the scheduled training sessions, particularly of the workshop and On-Country components. These components are delivered 'in-house' by a small but dedicated team of Indigenous staff and on that basis, multiple iterations are required to deliver to a large workforce of 3300+ people.

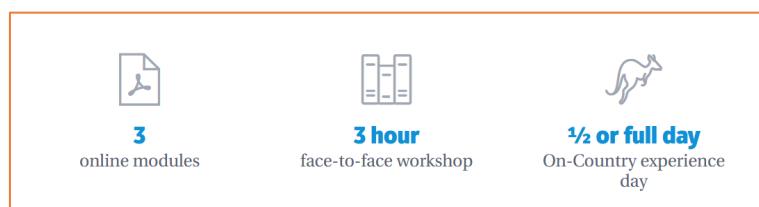


Fig. 8 Cultural Competency Training Program components

Despite the enormity of the task, the University is committed to ensuring that all staff complete the full program and set a 100% completion rate by 2025 at the commencement of the roll out. The 30% remaining staff will participate in the program rollout between now and 2025.



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